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978-1-107-63385-8 - Foch in Command: The Forging of a First World War General

Elizabeth Greenhalgh

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Foch in Command

Ferdinand Foch ended the First World War as Marshal of France and supreme commander of the Allied armies on the Western Front. *Foch in Command* is a pioneering study of his contribution to the Allied victory. Elizabeth Greenhalgh uses contemporary notebooks, letters and documents from previously under-studied archives to chart how the artillery officer, who had never commanded troops in battle when the war began, learned to fight the enemy, to cope with difficult colleagues and allies, and to manoeuvre through the political minefield of civil–military relations. She offers valuable insights into neglected questions: the contribution of unified command to the Allied victory; the role of a commander’s general staff; and the mechanisms of command at corps and army level. She demonstrates how an energetic Foch developed war-winning strategies for a modern industrial war, and how political realities contributed to his losing the peace.

ELIZABETH GREENHALGH is a QEII Research Fellow at the University of New South Wales, based at the Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra. Her previous publications include *Victory through Coalition: Britain and France during the First World War* (Cambridge, 2005).

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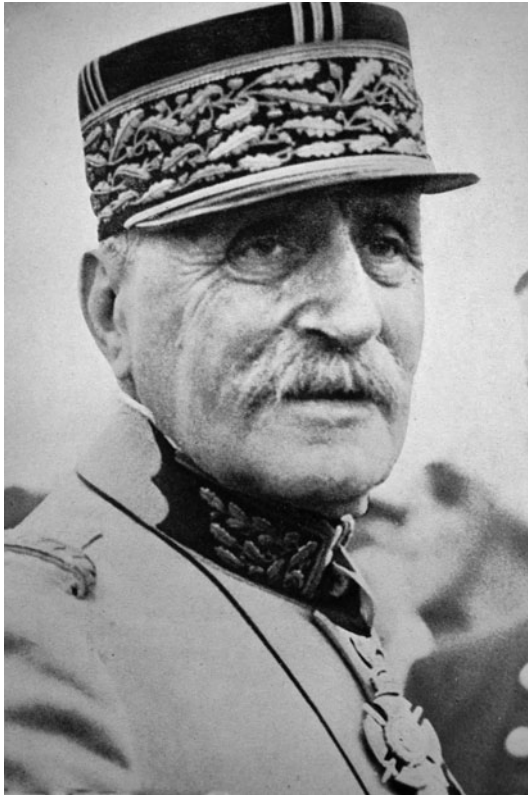


Illustration 1 Foch in marshal's dress uniform revealing the 'quaint, kindly glance' that Aston describes (in his *Foch*, facing p. 280).

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Preface

This study of the command of the French First World War general, Ferdinand Foch, who became supreme Allied commander in 1918 and was raised to the dignity of Marshal of France, has been long in the writing. Hence the list of debts incurred is correspondingly lengthy. First, however, some housekeeping.

For clarity I have italicised enemy units such as armies and divisions, and have used Allied (capitalised) to indicate the Entente Allies: principally, Britain, France, Italy and Russia. Although the USA became an associated, not an Allied, power when they joined the war in 1917, I have included the USA among the 'Allies' so as to avoid tedious repetition of 'Allied and associated countries'. I have preferred 'British' to 'English' when translating from French documents (and all translations are my own unless otherwise stated). Where the colloquial expression in diaries and other personal documents required a move from literal translation so as to make better sense in English, I have given the original French as well. I have preferred to use Sir Douglas Haig's manuscript diary, but usually there is little difference between manuscript and the typescript in the National Archives. Hence readers wishing to pursue a reference need not feel obliged to go to Edinburgh. In identifying documents in the footnotes, I have used names (for brevity) rather than titles: hence I have substituted 'Foch to Pétain' for 'Le Maréchal commandant les armées alliées au général commandant en chef les armées françaises du nord et du nord-est'. Maps are a perennial problem. I have used a variety of contemporary maps, sketches and diagrams, amended as far as possible to reflect the text. When citing casualty figures (which are notoriously unreliable), I use the term 'casualties' to include the missing, the wounded and the killed. The references show the sources used, but the reader must make allowances for figures which may include or exclude the lightly wounded, may include or exclude prisoners, may be based on incomplete data, and may have been massaged for propaganda purposes.

The extensive research for this study could not have been undertaken without financial support. I am very grateful to the University of New

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South Wales for the award of a three-year research fellowship, which allowed me the time to be thorough. In addition, King's College London awarded me a Libraries and Archives fellowship in 2004 which enabled me to spend time in the marvellous Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives; and the Australian Academy of the Humanities awarded me a travelling fellowship in 2006 which enabled me to visit archives in the USA and in Brussels.

Friends and colleagues have provided invaluable support. I thank especially and alphabetically: General André Bach, who kindly answered my questions about the French army and pointed me towards several useful archival collections; Dr Jim Beach, who sent me chapters of his doctoral thesis; General Robert A. Doughty, who read and commented on several draft chapters; Professor Keith Jeffery, who answered my questions about Henry Wilson; Dr Edwin Jurriëns and Dr Eleanor Hancock, who helped with translations from the Dutch and German respectively; Baron Christian de Posch, who sent me copies of his grandfather's papers; and Dr Mitchell Yockelson, who proved a helpful guide to the American archival collections. Most of all, I thank Professor John Horne; without his wise and thoughtful counsel on previous drafts, this would be a much worse book. All at Cambridge University Press have supported my endeavours efficiently and patiently.

The staff of the Academy Library of UNSW@ADFA and all the libraries and archives that I used were unfailingly helpful. Especial thanks go to the Service historique de la Défense, whose staff in the army archives remained friendly and welcoming despite having to work under very difficult conditions as the reading room was shifted from one building in the Château de Vincennes to another. For permission to quote from material they hold I am grateful to: the Virginia Historical Society (Mott papers); the Library of Congress (department of manuscripts); the Royal Archives and the Army Archives in Brussels; les Archives nationales, Paris; les Archives diplomatiques, Paris; la Bibliothèque de l'Institut, Paris; the National Archives (Public Record Office), Kew; the Bodleian Library, Oxford; Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge; the Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, London; the Trustees of the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh; the Trustees of the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London; and the manuscripts department of the British Library, London. I am grateful to Earl Haig for permission to use the Haig papers, and to the Warden and Fellows of New College Oxford (Milner papers). I thank also the DITEEX in Vincennes for permission to consult the papers of Generals Brugère, Cointet and Weygand. Finally, M. André Prunet-Foch received me most kindly in Paris and gave me permission to consult and quote from the Marshal's illuminating letters in the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Abbreviations

ADC	aide-de-camp (military assistant)
AEF	American Expeditionary Forces
<i>AFGG</i> + vol. no.	<i>Les Armées françaises dans la Grande Guerre</i> (see Bibliography)
AS	Artillerie spéciale (i.e. tanks)
<i>AS</i> + vol. no.	Poincaré, <i>Au service de la France</i> (see Bibliography)
BEF	British Expeditionary Force
CA	Corps d'Armée
CCC	Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge
CIGS	Chief of the Imperial General Staff
CinC	commander-in-chief
COS	chief of staff
CS	Fayolle, <i>Cahiers secrets</i> (see Bibliography)
<i>CWF</i>	Prior and Wilson, <i>Command on the Western Front</i> (see Bibliography)
[d]	dossier
DA	Direction de l'Arrière (dealt with transport and supply matters in rear areas)
DAB	Détachement d'Armée de Belgique
DAN	Détachement d'Armée du Nord
DC	Division de Cavalerie
DGCRA	Direction Générale des Communications et des Ravitaillements aux Armées (organisation to control all the army's transport and supply services)
DI	Division d'Infanterie
DIC	Division d'Infanterie Coloniale
DMO	Director of Military Operations (at the War Office in London)
DR	Division de Réserve
E-M	Etat-Major (general staff)

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EWB	Executive War Board
FF	Ferdinand Foch
FRUS	<i>Foreign Relations of the United States</i> (see Bibliography)
GAN	Groupe des Armées du Nord
GB	groupe de bombardement (bomber force)
GHQ	General Headquarters (British)
GQG	Grand Quartier Général (French HQ)
GQGA	Grand Quartier Général Allié (Allied headquarters)
IV	Weygand, <i>Idéal vécu</i> (see Bibliography)
JM	Journal de Marche (war diary)
JMO	Journal des Marches et des Opérations
<i>Joffre, JM</i>	Pedroncini (ed.), <i>Journal de Marche de Joffre</i> (see Bibliography)
LHCMA	Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London
MAE	Ministère des Affaires Etrangères
MC + vol. no.	Mordacq, <i>Le Ministère Clemenceau</i> (see Bibliography)
NCO	non-commissioned officer
OH + year	Edmonds <i>et al.</i> , <i>Military Operations: France and Belgium</i> (see Bibliography)
OH Italy	Edmonds and Davies, <i>Military Operations: Italy</i> (see Bibliography)
OHL	Oberste Heeresleitung (German high command)
PMR	Permanent Military Representative (to the SWC)
POW	prisoner of war
PPC	<i>Paris Peace Conference</i> (volume in <i>FRUS</i> ; see Bibliography)
PV	Doughty, <i>Pyrrhic Victory</i> (see Bibliography)
PWW + vol. no.	Link (ed.), <i>The Papers of Woodrow Wilson</i> (see Bibliography)
QMG	Quartermaster General (head of logistics in the British army)
RAW + vol. no.	Reichsarchiv, <i>Der Weltkrieg 1914 bis 1918</i> (see Bibliography)
RFC	Royal Flying Corps
SHD/T	Service Historique de la Défense/Département de l'Armée de Terre, Château de Vincennes
SWC	Supreme War Council

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<i>USAWW</i> + vol. no.	<i>United States Army in the World War</i> (see Bibliography)
<i>VTC</i>	Greenhalgh, <i>Victory through Coalition</i> (see Bibliography)
WO	War Office (British)